Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/421339197

Downloaded on Mar 27, 2024

PEOPLE
The Gazette
Montreal, Sat., July 8, 1978

MAKE EXTRA MONEY
DELIVER
The Gazette
IN YOUR AREA 878-1821

Downtown news stands have got 'em all

Big three news agents offer printed words for every taste

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
of The Gazette

If you're a freak for obscure magazines and newspapers from all over, Montreal is the place to be.

The city has three top news agents within about a mile of each other downtown.

Starting from the west, they are: International News (St. Catherine St. W. near Clouse St.), Multimags (de Maisonneuve Blvd. at Guy St.), and the legendary Metropolitan News, at Peel St. and St. Catherine St. W.

To a dedicated browser, these places are sanctuaries. Hundreds and thousands of Montrealers drop into one — or more — of these places daily, to check out everything from "Hockey Digest" to "Chess Review."

These shops bring the world to our fingertips. You can find a magazine about almost anything, or a newspaper from almost anywhere, in these places.

Metro news is best for out-of-town newspapers, but probably the biggest assortment of magazines in Montreal is at Multimags, around the corner from the Guy St. Metro exit.

The place used to be called Wolfe's when it was located at Guy and St. Catherine, but after the building burned down five times in the early 1970s, fourth owner George Hursan moved to de Maisonneuve, where he has a stock of well over 1,500 magazine titles.

Large array

A Hungarian-born Canadian who moved here in 1956, Hursan prides himself on his large array of art, architecture, design and film magazines. But he's got them all, he says.

As the readers browse the magazines, proprietors browse among the readers, and get to know the habits of their customers.

"A fellow who is interested in hot-rod magazines will probably buy ten publications at a time," says Hursan.

Says Al Goodman, of International News: "Those enthusiasts probably know better than I do when their magazines arrive each month."

Hursan, who keeps copious statistics about his business, estimates that about half his customers are bilingual, and that 30 per cent of those are francophones.

Francophone customers buy English magazines, he said, but few anglophones buy French-language titles.

Just under a third of his titles are French, he says. About 10 per cent are in third languages, the rest in English.

His top selling French-language publications, he says, are printed in France: **Paris Match**, **Elle**, **Nouvel Observateur** and the like.

My top local French sellers are quality publications such as **Forces**, a beautiful magazine put out by Hydro-Quebec, that sells for $4.75."

Both Multimags and International pride themselves on catering to the eggheads.

For instance, notes Hursan, "we sell as many **Le Devoir** and **Le Monde** as we do **La Presse**, while we may only sell nine of **Journal de Montreal** per day."

Yet, on a Sunday, you'll often see a customer at International walk out with a copy of **Dimanche Matin** and the jumbo **New York Times**.

Says Goodman: "The people who buy the **Sunday Times** or the London **Sunday Times** are not necessarily American or British.

"It's the lack of a 'quality' local publication that makes them buy these papers, yet they also want to keep up with the latest sports news, so they buy the local tabloids.

"We put the local tabloids — the Pelideau press — at the bottom of the racks towards the back of our store," says Hursan.

"We don't sell many of them — they sell mainly at the neighborhood corner stores — but they are there in case anyone wants them.

"I think the best conviction in the world is for people to have a choice. If they want to buy trash, let them buy it. It's the same with drugs. If you legalize some of them and people abuse them, then you set up a system to cure them."

Proprietor George Hursan at Multimags: He reads N.Y. 'Times' and 'Le Monde'

Hursan is a man devoted to publications and to opinion.

"I don't like drunks in my store so that's why I don't sell the Blue Bonnets racing forms. On the other hand, the men who buy the homosexual magazines are the most well-behaved customers we have."

Browsers

How about eternal browsers, the people who stay in the store for an hour or two and thumb through their favorite magazine without buying them?

"The only time I mind them is during rush hours," says Hursan, "because they clog up the store.

"Otherwise, I don't mind at all. I like to have my place look crowded, it helps business."

Says International's Goodman: "If you can't stand browsers, then you shouldn't be in this business. I know that I wouldn't buy a magazine unless I knew what was in it."

Goodman says he gets a specialized clientele, people who enter his store for a specific purpose. "Believe it or not **The Economist** (from Britain) rivals **Time** or **Newsweek** on week by sales."

He also has an interesting observation on the decline of underground publications.

"You'll find that a lot of the people who were buying **Logos** ten years ago are now buying the **Financial Times**.

"People have become less radical or, at least, they're transferring their interests to the nature magazines, like **Harrowsmith** or **Mother Earth**.

"Perhaps they found out that they can't save the world, so now they're into building log cabins and using solar energy."

Special-interest magazines are growing as a percentage of the general magazine market, experts note.

General-interest magazines like **Saturday Evening Post** have folded in recent years, or have changed, like **Life** into special occasional publications.

Experts speculate that the growth of television news has killed off general-interest magazines.

But at the same time, increased incomes in North America have created a "hobby explosion" which has left almost everyone with some special interest.

That's where the new magazines come in. Multimags, Metro, and International offer something for everyone, no matter how obscure or rare an interest is involved.

Each store has its own ambience. While International and Multimags are relatively spacious, with room got pockets of meditative browsers, Metropolitan is much more hectic, as is a fourth good spot, City News, on St. Catherine St. W. between Mountain St. and Drummond St.

At City News the front door opens up into a tiny corridor where the rack of best-selling magazines is located, as well as the cash register. So it's a body-crushing chore getting in and out of the place.

As far as atmosphere and flavor are concerned, no place beats the famous Metropolitan News, which is celebrating 60 years in business this year.

Celebrating? Well, not exactly. In fact, it's just business as usual.

There's a crowd at virtually all times (except late evenings). The place is the size of a small living room, filled with customers squirming and snaking to get to their favorite periodicals.

The floors are piled with the city's biggest array of out-of-town newspapers. It's hard to move in the tiny aisles, as customers can jam the place, it's hot, and you have to breathe in when the next guy breathes out.

The owners of this downtown institution stand at a podium at the front of the store barking out a steady stream of lines like "Please don't open the magazines — this is not a library here. Sir, you there in the sports section, please either buy the magazine or put it down, thank you."

The regulars usually ignore such advice, although it is not a place to linger too long.

But it's got the goods.

In all, co-owner George Rubin says, the shop has periodicals from 120 countries, including such exotic spots as Dayton, Ohio.

The other owner, who won't even give his name, doesn't much like reporters. "We don't need the publicity," he says. "Come back in a month."

Rubin is slightly more co-operative. "I've got 15 minutes if you can catch me on the fly," he says.

He has worked at Metro News for 30 years. "I've served grandchildren of people I served in the old days," he says.

No photos

Photos are forbidden. "Absolutely not. We had a film crew in here some years ago and they blew our electricity, wound up costing us $200. Exterior shots only."

Ask him how many copies he sells of the New York **Sunday Times** and he says guardedly: "I never discuss figures but I can tell you we sell more than anyone else."

Ask him what celebrities patronize the agency and he says in blase fashion, "Oh, they all come in, because we're here and we are the place to come to."

Each shop has its own style, too, sometimes based on where the racks are located.

At Metropolitan, the sports magazines shell hangs directly above the "alternative media" racks (rock, Village Voice, etc.), leading to jostling between jocks and hippies.

And women's magazines are located next to the popular porn section ("**Playboy**," "**Penthouse**," etc.).

Those dick skin rags, in turn, are located directly below the left-wing and liberal magazines, leading to clashes between macho types and earnest thinkers.

Not to mention the Brits, because the British papers are sandwiched between the leftist mags and the skin books.

• • •

What do these merchants of the printed word do after work? Go home and watch TV?

George Rubin of Metropolitan says: "I'm an inveterate reader, but I don't have much time to read so I pretty well stick to **Time** and **Newsweek**."

George Hursan of Multimags says he reads the New York **Times** and "**Le Monde** religiously. They really are the best papers in the world." But Hursan is also an indefatigable sports nut, and says he follows the local sportswriting scene with an eagle eye. He even listens to the Ted Tevan sports talk show on CFCF on occasion.

Al Goodman of International enjoys "**The Economist**."

Magazines: You name it they've got it

The covers:

Lurid, bright, and varied, they offer something for everyone, designed to fish the unsuspecting browser into paying out $1.50 or so for the latest on just about any subject you can imagine. Come on a short tour of a big Montreal news stand.

Here's the women's section. "**Viva** offers articles on 'Laughing at Jealousy,' 'Shaping Your Own 5-Year Career Plan,' and 'Talking With Jon Voigt.'

"**Woman Today** asks 'Orgasm: Does It Control Your Sex Life?', and 'Do You Really Want Your Husband to Stop Drinking?' "**Ms** the most serious of the feminist mags, offers 'The Autobiography of a Middle-Aged Heterosexual Radical Feminist.'

There's lots more.

"**Redbook**, an old stand-by trying to keep up with changing times, asks 'Should You Have A Baby?' What 88,000 Women Can Tell You', and also demands 'How Bad Is Your Child's Lunch?'

"**New Woman** tells you 'How To Become Rich (Without Really Working)', and also has 'Self-Confidence: How You Come By This Elusive Quality', and 'Divorced? Separated? Dumped? How You Can Get Him Out Of Your System.'

There's also "**Working Woman** which describes 'How to Get Paid What You're Worth.'

Those are just a few of the mags aimed at women.

There are acres more. A million trees died to bring you automobile magazines, motorcycle magazines, van magazines, soccer magazines, toy-soldier magazines, camping magazines, home-computer magazines, bondage magazines, handyman magazines, religious magazines, girlie magazines, travel magazines, baseball magazines, political magazines, fashion magazines, recipe magazines, and many, many more.

Skateboard enthusiasts need only to turn to the pages of "**The Skateboarder**" to witness 'New High-Speed Stroboscopic Action Sequences.'

Golf? There are a ton of magazines starting with the word Golf: "**Magazine**', '**International**', '**World**', '**Monthly**', '**Illustrated**', '**Digest**', '**Score**' and '**Tips**'.

You name it, there's a magazine for it. How about "**UFO Report** with stories like 'Grotesque Creatures: 10 Witness UFO Aliens at Pennsylvania Farm — 8 Feet Tall, Ape-like, with Protruding Fangs.' Or the old classic, "**National Enquirer** which tells us 'Finger Pressure on Ears Stops Hunger.'

And for teenagers, here's a cover line from "**Tiger Beat**": 'Shaun (Cassidy) Stops Smoking! Don't Let Him Start Again. You Can Help!'

—Juan Rodriguez

Metro News was as busy in 1951 as today

One top newsagent won't carry any porn

Pornography is a touchy subject.

"I hate to talk out of both sides of my mouth," says Al Goodman of International News, on St. Catherine St. W. near the Forum.

He's the only major newsagent downtown who doesn't stock those plastic-covered "adult" magazines full of all sorts of sexual contortions in color and black and white.

"I don't believe in censorship, but on the other hand, I don't want to run a porn shop," he says.

"I don't in the least condemn the others for selling it. I carry 'Playboy' and 'Penthouse' because basically they really are fairly good magazines."

His policy must cost him money, because "dirty books" are big-ticket items. Sex books can provide a large part of a shop's profits.

Says George Hursan of Multimags, on De Maisonneuve Blvd. at Guy St.: "Well, I don't really like to carry it, but why not?"

"I am for anyone buying anything they want to buy. It's the same with drugs. Legalize them and if people abuse them, then society should be prepared to cure them."

He stocks a wide assortment of adult books and magazines.

George Rubin at Metropolitan News, on Peel St. near St. Catherine St., shakes his head when asked about porn.

"Oh we don't really carry porn around here," he says, although there is a rack of well-thumbed books with titles like 'Bloody Maude' and 'Cry Uncle.'

Hursan of Multimags notes that there is no embarrassment on the faces of people who buy plastic-covered porn — usually pictures of rather unappealing people in a lot of silly frozen sexual poses.

"Maybe ten years ago people might come to the cash with an embarrassed look on their face. But not today.

"And good for them, too."

-Juan Rodriguez

Copyright © 2024 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.
POWERED BY Newspapers™